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iii

## FARABI'S *PLATO*<sup>1</sup>

By LEO STRAUSS

Eben derselbe Gedanke kann, an  
einem andern Orte, einen ganz  
andern Wert haben.

Lessing, *Leibniz, von den ewigen Strafen*.

It is generally admitted that one cannot understand the teaching of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* before one has understood the teaching of "the philosophers"; for the former presents itself as a Jewish correction of the latter. To begin with, one can identify "the philosophers" with the Islamic Aristotelians, and one may describe their teaching as a blend of genuine Aristotelianism with Neo-platonism and, of course, Islamic tenets. If, however, one wants to grasp the principle transforming that mixture of heterogeneous elements into a consistent, or intelligible, whole, one does well to follow the signpost erected by Maimonides himself.

In his letter to Samuel ibn Tibbon, he makes it abundantly clear that he considered the greatest authority in philosophy, apart from Aristotle himself, not Avicenna or Averroes, nor even Avempace, but Fârâbî. Of Fârâbî's works, he mentions in that context only one by its title, and he recommends it to ibn Tibbon in the strongest terms. Thus we may assume to begin with that he considered it Fârâbî's most important book. He calls that book *The principles of the beings*. Its original title is *The political governments*.

There can then be no doubt as to the proper beginning, i. e. the only beginning which is not arbitrary, of the understanding of Maimonides' philosophic background: one has to start from

<sup>1</sup> I wish to express my thanks to Professor A. H. Halkin for kindly checking my translations from the Arabic.



an analysis of Fârâbî's *Political governments*. It would be unwise to attempt such an analysis now. In the first place, we lack a satisfactory edition.<sup>2</sup> Above all, the full understanding of the book presupposes the study of two parallel works of Fârâbî's, *The principles of the opinions of the people of the virtuous city*<sup>3</sup> and *The virtuous religious community*, the second of which has not yet been edited at all. Maimonides presumably preferred *The political governments* to these parallel presentations. To discover the reason for that preference, or, at any rate, to understand *The political governments* fully, one has to compare the doctrines contained in that book with the doctrines contained in the parallel works, and thus to lay bare the teaching characteristic of *The political governments*. For that teaching consists, to some extent, of the silent rejection of certain tenets which are adhered to in the two other works.

We limit ourselves here to stressing one feature of *The political governments* (and, *mutatis mutandis*, of the two parallel works) which by itself clearly indicates the most striking trait of Fârâbî's philosophy. As is shown already by the difference between its authentic and its customary title, the book treats the whole of philosophy proper (i. e. with the omission of logic and mathematic) within a political framework. In this respect, Fârâbî takes as his model, not any of the Aristotelian writings known to him or to us, but Plato's *Republic* and, to a lesser extent, Plato's *Laws* which also present the whole of philosophy within a political framework. To account for this Platonizing procedure,

<sup>2</sup> The original was edited in Hyderabad in 1346 H. Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation was edited by Filipowski in the ס' האסוף, Leipzig 1849, 1-64. Cf. also F. Dieterici's German translation (*Die Staatsleitung von Alfârâbî*), Leiden 1904. The text underlying the Hyderabad edition as well as the German translation is less complete than the one underlying the Hebrew translation; the passage from p. 62, line 21 in Filipowski's edition till the end is missing in both the Hyderabad edition and the German translation; it can partly be traced in Fârâbî's *Musterstaat* (ed. Dieterici, 71 f.). A comparison of the Hebrew translation of *The political governments* with the parallel in the *Musterstaat* shows that the text of the former is also incomplete: the whole concluding part of *The political governments* (roughly corresponding to *Musterstaat* 72 — end) is at present lost.

<sup>3</sup> Edited by Dieterici under the title *Der Musterstaat*, Leiden 1895.

it is not necessary to look out for any particular Platonist tradition: the *Republic* and the *Laws* were accessible to Fârâbî in Arabic translations.

Fârâbî followed Plato not merely as regards the manner in which he presented the philosophic teaching in his most important books. He held the view that Plato's philosophy was the true philosophy. To reconcile his Platonism with his adherence to Aristotle, he could take three more or less different ways. First, he could try to show that the explicit teachings of both philosophers can be reconciled with each other. He devoted to this attempt his *Concordance of the opinions of Plato and Aristotle*. The argument of that work is partly based on the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*: by accepting this piece of neo-platonic origin as a genuine work of Aristotle, he could easily succeed in proving the substantial agreement of the explicit teachings of both philosophers concerning the crucial subjects. It is however very doubtful whether Fârâbî considered his *Concordance* as more than an exoteric treatise, and thus whether it would be wise of us to attach great importance to its explicit argument.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, he could show that the esoteric teachings of both philosophers are identical. Thirdly, he could show that "the aim" of both philosophers is identical. The third approach is used by him in his tripartite work *The aims of the philosophy of Plato and of Aristotle*, or, as Averroes quotes it, *The two philosophies*. The second part of that work is devoted exclusively to Plato's philosophy. By studying that central part which alone is at present accessible in a critical edition,<sup>5</sup> one is enabled to

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Paul Kraus, "Plotin chez les Arabes", *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, v. 23, 1940-41, 269. — Note the use of the term "opinion" in the title of the *Concordance*. Cf. note 69 below.

<sup>5</sup> *Plato Arabus*, v. II. *Alfarabius: De Platonis philosophia*, edd. F. Rosenthal and R. Walzer, London (Warburg Institute) 1943. The edition is accompanied by a Latin translation and by notes. It will be quoted in the following notes "Fârâbî, *Plato*"; figures in parentheses after §§ will indicate pages and line of the text. — The first part of Fârâbî's *Two philosophies* was edited under the title *k. taḥṣīl al-sa'âda* in Hyderabad 1345 H.; the third part (dealing with the philosophy of Aristotle) is not yet edited. The whole is accessible in the incomplete Hebrew translation by Falkera (*Reshit hokma*, ed. by David, 61-92).



grasp fully the character of Fârâbî's Platonism and therewith of Fârâbî's own philosophy, and thus to take the first step toward the understanding of the philosophic background of Maimonides.

## I. FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Fârâbî's exposition of Plato's philosophy claims to be a complete survey of its main topics:<sup>6</sup> Platonic topics which are not mentioned in it, are considered by him either unimportant or merely exoteric. The procedure which he chooses, may be called genetic: he does not present the final Platonic "dogmata" by following the scheme supplied by the division of philosophy into logic, physics and ethics or any other scheme; nor does he adopt the procedure of Theo of Smyrna by describing the sequence in which the Platonic dialogues should be read; on the other hand, he does not engage in a historical study of the "development" of Plato's thought;<sup>7</sup> he simply describes what he considers the inner and necessary sequence of the investigations of the mature Plato. He tries to assign to each step of Plato's investigations one Platonic dialogue; one way or the other, he succeeds in thus accounting for most, if not for almost all, of the dialogues belonging to the traditional *Corpus Platonicum*. What he says about the individual dialogues, sounds in some cases fairly fanciful. He certainly had no access to all of them, and we do not know to what extent the indirect knowledge which he owed to Aristotle, Galen, Theo, Proclus or others has been distorted on the more or less circuitous way in which it reached him. But it is unimportant what he believed or guessed about the purport of

<sup>6</sup> Its title is: "The philosophy of Plato, its parts, and the grades of dignity of its parts, from its beginning to its end." Cf. also the end of the *Tahşîl* (quoted in Fârâbî, *Plato*, IX).

<sup>7</sup> How little Fârâbî was concerned with history, is shown most clearly by the fact that he presents Plato's investigations as entirely independent of the investigations of any predecessors, although he knew of course (from the *Metaphysics* e. g.) that Plato was a disciple of Socrates as well as of other philosophers. It is only when describing one of the last steps of Plato's, that he mentions "the way of Socrates" which a historian would have explained at the beginning of his exposition. — Cf. p. 376 f., below.

this or that dialogue which he never read. What matters is what he thought about the philosophy of Plato as a whole which he certainly knew from the *Republic*, the *Timaeus* and the *Laws*.

According to Fârâbî, Plato was guided by the question of the perfection of man, or of happiness. After having realized that man's perfection or his happiness is identical with, or at least inseparable from, "a certain science (*ἐπιστήμη*) and a certain way of life (*βίος*)", he tries to discover both the science and the way of life in question. The successive examination of all sciences and ways of life which are generally accepted (*ἐνδοξοί*), leads him to the result that none of them meets his demands.<sup>8</sup> Compelled to discover the desired science and way of life by himself,<sup>9</sup> he finds first that the former is supplied by philosophy and that the latter is supplied by the royal or political art, and then that "philosopher" and "king" are identical. This identity implies that virtue is, if not identical with, at least inseparable from, philosophy. Since this contradicts the popular notions of the virtues, he investigated first the various virtues;<sup>10</sup> he found that the genuine virtues are different from the virtues "which are famous in the cities" (from the *ἀρεταὶ πολιτικαὶ* or *δημόδεις*).<sup>11</sup> But the central question concerns, on the basis of the result mentioned, the precise meaning of "philosopher". This subject to whose discussion the *Phaedrus* is devoted,<sup>12</sup> divides itself into four parts: 1) the *φύσις* of the future philosopher (the philosophic *ἔρως*); 2) the ways of philosophic investigation (diairesis and synthesis); 3) the ways of teaching (rhetoric

<sup>8</sup> The Platonic model of Fârâbî's presentation of the successive examination of the generally received sciences and arts is to be found in the *Apology of Socrates* (21 b 9–22 e 5). Cf. also for the whole first part of the treatise *Euthydemus* 282 a–d 3 and 288 d 5–290 d 8.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. note 7 above.

<sup>10</sup> With the exception of justice; cf. the distinction between justice and the virtues in Fârâbî's *Plato* § 30 (22, 5).

<sup>11</sup> *Phaedo* 68 c 5–69 c 3 and 82 a 11 ff.; *Republic* 430 c 3–5; 500 d 8; 518 d 9–e3; 619 c 6 ff.; *Laws* 710 a 5 and 968a2. Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1116 a 17 ff.

<sup>12</sup> At the beginning of his summary of the *Phaedrus* (§ 22), Fârâbî uses *tafahhâşa* instead of the usual *faḥaşa*, thus indicating the particular significance of that passage.



and dialectic); 4) the ways of transmitting the teaching (oral or in writing). After the question of what human perfection is, has thus received a full answer, Plato had to turn his attention to the conflict between happiness fully understood and the generally accepted opinions about happiness, or, in other words, to the conflict classically represented by the fate of Socrates, between the views and the way of life of the philosopher and the opinions and the way of life of his unphilosophic fellow-citizens. Rejecting both the assimilation of the philosopher to the vulgar and the withdrawal from political life, he had to seek a city different from the cities which existed in his time: the city completed in speech<sup>13</sup> in the *Republic* whose results are supplemented in various ways by the *Timaeus*, the *Laws*, the *Menexenus* and other dialogues. The final question which he raised, concerned the way in which the cities of his time could be gradually converted to the life of the perfect city.

It is evident at first sight — and closer investigation merely confirms the first impression<sup>14</sup> — that this view of Plato's philosophy cannot be traced to Neoplatonism. The apparent identification of philosophy with the royal art, the apparent subordination of the subject of the *Timaeus* to the political theme of the *Republic*, the implicit rejection of the "metaphysical" interpretation of the *Philebus*, the *Parmenides*, the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus* might lead one to suspect that, according to Fârâbî, Plato's philosophy is essentially political. Since Fârâbî considered the Platonic view of philosophy the true view, we would thus be driven to believe that Fârâbî himself attributed to philosophy an essentially political meaning. This belief would be so paradoxical, it would be so much opposed to all opinions which we have inherited, that we cannot but feel very hesitant to accept it. What is then Fârâbî's real view of the relation of philosophy and politics in Plato's philosophy?

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Republic* 369 c 9, 472 e 1, 473 e 2, 501 e4-5 and 592 a 11.

<sup>14</sup> Fârâbî, *Plato*, 17 f., 20, 22-24.

## II. PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS

The expression "Plato's philosophy" is ambiguous. When Fârâbî uses it in the heading of his treatise and again in its concluding sentence, he refers to Plato's investigations as summarized in the treatise. "Plato's philosophy" thus understood is essentially concerned with happiness and in particular with the relation of philosophy to happiness; and since happiness is the subject of political science,<sup>15</sup> we are justified in saying that "Plato's philosophy" is essentially a political investigation. Within the context of this political philosophy, Fârâbî's Plato discusses among other things the essential character of philosophy: in order to establish the relation of philosophy to happiness, he has to establish first what philosophy itself is. Now it would be rash, if not altogether foolish, to assume that the philosophy whose relation to happiness is the theme implying all Platonic subjects, exhausts itself in the investigation of its own relation to happiness. We are thus led to another meaning of "Plato's philosophy", viz. what Fârâbî's Plato himself understood by "philosophy". The second meaning ought to be authoritative, if for no other reason at least for this that Fârâbî himself means to introduce his readers, not to his own view, but to Plato's view: Fârâbî gradually leads his readers from what he presents as his view of philosophy to what he considers the genuinely Platonic view.<sup>16</sup>

Philosophy would be essentially political, if the sole subject of philosophy were "the political things", and in particular "the noble things and the just things". Such a view is traditionally attributed to Socrates as distinguished from Plato.<sup>17</sup> Fârâbî

<sup>15</sup> Fârâbî, *Iḥṣâ al-'ulûm*, ch. 5. Cf. Maimonides, *Millot ha-higgayon*, ch. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Observe the distinction, made at the end of the *Taḥṣîl*, between "Plato's philosophy" and "the aim of Plato's philosophy", and also the reference to the different ranks of dignity of the different parts of Plato's philosophy in the title of the *Plato*.

<sup>17</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 987b 1 ff. Cf. *Eth. Eud.* 1216 b 3 ff.; Plato, *Gorgias* 521 d 6-8; *Phaedrus* 229 e2-230a2; *Ap. Socr.* 38a1-6. (Cf. also Xeno-



alludes to this difference between the Platonic and the Socratic view when speaking of "the way of Socrates" which consisted of, or culminated in, "the scientific investigation concerning justice and the virtues": he does not identify that investigation, or "the way of Socrates" generally speaking, with philosophy. In fact, he distinguishes philosophy as unmistakably from "the way of Socrates" as he distinguishes it from "the way of Thrasymachus".<sup>18</sup> Philosophy could be identified with political philosophy, if "justice and the virtues" were the main subjects of philosophy, and this would be the case, if justice and the virtues were the highest subjects in general. A Platonist who would adopt such a view, might be expected to refer to the "ideas" of justice and the other virtues: Fârâbî is completely silent about these as well as about any other "ideas".<sup>19</sup> His Plato is so far from narrowing down philosophy to the study of political things that he defines philosophy as the theoretical art which supplies "the science of the essence of each of all beings."<sup>20</sup> That is to say: he identifies philosophy with "the art of demonstration".<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, his Plato actually excludes the study of political and moral subjects from the domain of philosophy proper. His investigations are guided throughout by the fundamental distinction (constantly repeated in Fârâbî's exposition) between "science" and "way of life", and in particular between that science and that way of life which are essential to happiness. The desired science is the science of the essence of each of all beings or, more generally expressed, the science

phon, *Memor.* I 1, 11-16). — That Fârâbî knew of differences between Plato and Socrates, appears from his *Concordance* (*Philosophische Abhandlungen*, ed. by Dieterici, 19 f.).

<sup>18</sup> Fârâbî, *Plato* § 30 (22, 4-5). Cf. § 28. — The opposite view is held by Rosenthal-Walzer (XII).

<sup>19</sup> *Ib.*, XVIII. Cf. *Republic* 504 d 4 ff.

<sup>20</sup> *Ib.*, §§ 2 (4, 1-3) and 16 (12, 10-15). As regards the science of the essence of each of all beings, cf. *Republic* 480a 11-13, 484d5-6, 485b5-8, 490b2-4; *Parmenides* 130b-c; *Phaedrus* 262b7-8 and 270a-d1.

<sup>21</sup> Observe the absence of the art of demonstration from the list of the parts of logic in §§8-11; see in particular § 11 (9, 8). As regards the use of "philosophy" in the sense of "art of demonstration", cf. Maimonides, *Millot ha-higgayon*, ch. 14.

of the beings which is distinguished from the science of the ways of life.<sup>22</sup> The science of the beings is supplied by philosophy which is a theoretical art fundamentally distinguished from the practical arts, whereas the desired way of life is supplied by the highest practical art, i. e. the royal art. With a view to the fact that the theoretical art called "philosophy" (i. e. the art of demonstration) is the only way leading to the science of the beings, i. e. the theoretical science *par excellence*, the science of the beings too is called "philosophy".<sup>23</sup> Theoretical science (the science of Timaeus) is presented in the *Timaeus* whose subjects are "the divine and the natural beings", and practical or political science (the science of Socrates) is presented (in its final form) in the *Laws* whose subject is "the virtuous way of life".<sup>24</sup> Since philosophy is essentially theoretical and not practical or political, and since it is essentially related to theoretical science only, only the subjects of the *Timaeus*, and not moral or political subjects, can be called philosophic in the precise sense of the term.<sup>25</sup> This, it seems to me, is, according to Fârâbî, "the aim" of Plato.

The precise meaning of "philosophy" can easily be reconciled with the broader meaning underlying Fârâbî's expression "Plato's philosophy". For the philosopher who, transcending the sphere of moral or political things, engages in the quest for the essence

<sup>22</sup> Fârâbî, *Plato*, §§ 6 (6, 15 f.), 8 (7, 13 f.; cf. 7, 16 f.) and 9 (8, 2 f.).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. §§ 22 (15, 18 ff.) and 23 (16, 13-15) where "philosophy" evidently means, not the art by means of which the science of the beings is acquired, but, if not that science itself, at least the actual investigation of beings which leads to that science.

<sup>24</sup> §§ 16 and 26-28. Cf. § 16 with § 18 *in princ.*; cf. also § 12 (9, 11-17). The implied attribution of the teaching of the *Laws* to Socrates is not altogether surprising; cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1265a11 ff.

<sup>25</sup> This view can be traced (considering the etymology of "philosophy") to the Aristotelian distinction between *φρόνησις* and *σοφία*: it is *φρόνησις*, and not *σοφία*, which is concerned with moral or political subjects. Cf. also *Metaphysics* 993b19 ff. — The same view is underlying Maimonides' interpretation of the story of Adam's fall in the *Guide* (I 2): prior to the fall, Adam possessed the highest intellectual perfection; he knew all the *νοητά* (and, of course, also the *αἰσθητά*), but had no knowledge of "good and evil", i. e. of the *καλά* and *αἰσχροτά*. Cf. also Millot *ha-higgayon* ch. 8 on the difference between demonstrative and moral knowledge.



of all beings, has to give an account of his doings by answering the question "why philosophy?" That question cannot be answered but with a view to the natural aim of man which is happiness, and in so far as man is by nature a political being, it cannot be answered but within a political framework. In other words, the question "why philosophy?" is only a special form of the general question "what is the right way of life?", i. e. of the question guiding all moral or political investigations. This question and the answer to it which are strictly speaking merely preliminary, can nevertheless be described as philosophic since only the philosopher is competent to elaborate that question and to answer it. One must go one step further and say, using the language of an ancient, that *σοφία* and *σωφροσύνη*, or philosophy (as quest for the truth about the whole) and self-knowledge (as realization of the need of that truth as well as of the difficulties obstructing its discovery and its communication) cannot be separated from each other. This means, considering the relation of the questions "why philosophy?" and "what is the right way of life?" that one cannot become a philosopher without becoming engaged in "the scientific investigation concerning justice and the virtues". Yet it must be understood that philosophy proper on the one hand and the reflection on the human or political meaning of philosophy, or what is called moral and political philosophy, on the other, do not belong to the same level. If Fârâbî's Plato had disregarded that difference of level, he would not have distinguished philosophy as the way leading to theoretical science from the practical or political arts or sciences, but would have accepted the usual view, adopted in the other writings of Fârâbî, according to which philosophy consists of theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy.

Both that usual view and the view suggested in the *Plato* imply that philosophy is not essentially political. Both these views imply that philosophy is not identical with political philosophy or with the art to which political philosophy leads, the royal or political art. Yet, it may be objected, precisely in the *Plato* philosophy is explicitly identified with the royal art. Our first answer has to be that this is not the case. Even they who believe that Fârâbî adopted the political interpretation of

Plato's philosophy, have to admit that his Plato identified, not philosophy with the royal art, but the "true" philosophy with the "true" royal art.<sup>26</sup> This is not very precise. What Fârâbî says is, first of all, that, according to Plato, the *homo philosophus* and the *homo rex* are the same thing.<sup>27</sup> This by itself does not mean more than that a human being cannot acquire the specific art of the philosopher without at the same time acquiring the specific art of the king and *vice versa*: it does not necessarily mean that these two arts themselves are identical. Fârâbî continues as follows: "[According to Plato,] each of the two (*sc.* the philosopher and the king) is rendered perfect by one function and one faculty." The philosopher reaches his perfection by the exercise of one specific function and by the training of one specific faculty, and the king reaches his perfection by the exercise of another specific function and by the training of another specific faculty. Fârâbî: "[According to Plato,] each of the two (*sc.* the philosopher and the king) has one function which supplies the science desired from the outset and the way of life desired from the outset; each of the two (*sc.* functions) produces in those who take possession of it, and in all other human beings that happiness which is truly happiness." The function of the philosopher supplies by itself both the science of the beings and the right way of life and thus produces true happiness in both the philosophers and all other human beings; the function of the king supplies by itself both the science of the beings and the right way of life and thus produces true happiness in both the kings and all other human beings. One may say that in the last of his three statements on the subject Fârâbî practically identifies philosophy with the royal art: philosophy proves to contain the royal art (since it supplies the right way of life which is the product of the royal art) and the

<sup>26</sup> Fârâbî, *Plato*, 25 and XI.

<sup>27</sup> *Ib.*, § 18. As regards "homo" in the expression "homo philosophus", cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1178b5-7 with § 16 (12, 10-13). (In the translation of § 32 [22, 15] "vir perfectus" and "vir indagator" should be replaced by "homo perfectus" and "homo indagator". The translator must not presume to decide for the author the question as to whether perfection, or investigation, is a prerogative of the male sex.) — Cf. notes 35 and 54 below.



royal art proves to contain philosophy (since it supplies the science of the beings which is the product of philosophy). But one would be equally justified in saying that even the last statement does not do away with the fundamental distinction between philosophy and the royal art: while it is true that the specific function of the philosopher which is primarily directed toward the science of the beings, cannot be exercised fully without producing the right way of life, and that the specific function of the king which is primarily directed toward the right way of life, cannot be exercised fully without producing the science of the beings, it is no less true that philosophy is primarily and essentially the quest for the science of the beings, whereas the royal art is primarily and essentially concerned with the right way of life. Even the last statement does then not necessarily do away with the difference of level between philosophy proper and moral or political investigations. While Fârâbî's third statement leaves no doubt as to this that philosophy and the royal art are coextensive, he certainly does not say with so many words that they are identical.<sup>28</sup>

It would be unfair however to insist too strongly on subtleties of this kind and thus to overlook the wood for the trees. We certainly cannot assume that the average reader will consider

<sup>28</sup> In a different context — § 25 (20, 9) — he states that, according to Plato, the royal function exercised in the perfect city is "philosophy *simpliciter*" (not, as R.-W. translate, "philosophia ipsa"). But "philosophy *simpliciter*" which embraces the theoretical perfection as well as other perfections is not identical with "philosophy" which consists of the theoretical perfection alone (see *Tahşîl* 42, 12 ff. and 39, 11 ff.). Besides, the fact that the royal function exercised in the perfect city is philosophy, does not mean more than that in the perfect city philosophy and kingship are united: it does not mean that they are identical in the perfect city; still less does it mean that they are identical as such. Finally, the royal function exercised in the perfect city is not identical with the royal art: the royal art, or the perfect king, exist also in imperfect cities (§ 23). — It should also be noted that in the last remark occurring in the *Plato*, which explicitly bears on the subject, not the identity, but the union of theoretical and practical sciences is, not so much asserted, as demanded: § 28. — Note also the silence about politics in the latter part of § 22 (15, 18 ff.) as compared with the first part: while the *φύσις* of the philosopher is the same as that of the king or statesman, the specific work of the former is different from that of the latter. — Cf. note 57 below.

Fârâbî's second or central statement his last word on the subject. For all practical purposes, Fârâbî identified philosophy with the royal art: why then did he hesitate to do so overtly?<sup>29</sup> How is that identification intelligible seeing that philosophy is a theoretical art and the royal art is a practical art? We must try to understand why, after having brought into prominence the essentially theoretical character of philosophy as distinguished from the royal art, Fârâbî blurs that distinction by implying that philosophy supplies the right way of life, the product of the royal art, in the same way, and, as it were, in the same breath, in which it supplies the science of the beings. We must try to understand why, after having taught that philosophy must be supplemented by something else in order to produce happiness, he teaches that philosophy does not need to be supplemented by something else in order to produce happiness.<sup>30</sup> If he understands by "philosophy" in both cases the same thing, he flatly contradicts himself. This would not be altogether surprising. For, as we ought to have learned from Maimonides who knew his Fârâbî, contradictions are a normal pedagogic device of the genuine philosophers.<sup>31</sup> In that case it would be incumbent upon the reader to find out by his own reflection, if guided by the author's intimations, which of the two contradictory statements was considered by the author to be true. If he understands by "philosophy" in both cases different things, that ambiguity would be equally revealing: no careful writer would express himself ambiguously about an important and at the same time thematic subject without good reasons.

The question of the relation of philosophy to the royal art is inseparably connected, in Fârâbî's argument, with the question of the relation of human perfection to happiness. To begin with, he teaches that, according to Plato, philosophy does supply

<sup>29</sup> The very identification of "philosopher" and "king" requires an explanation considering that that identification occurs in what appears to be a summary of the *Politicus*. For the *Politicus* is based on the explicit thesis that philosopher and king are not identical. See *Sophist* 217a3-b2 and *Politicus in princ.* Cf. also *Phaedrus* 252e1-2 and 253b1-3.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. § 18 with the passages mentioned in note 32.

<sup>31</sup> *Guide I* Introd. (9b-11 b Munk).



the science of the beings and therewith man's highest perfection, but has to be supplemented by something else in order to produce happiness. That supplement is the right way of life which is the product of the royal art.<sup>32</sup> By asserting that the philosopher is identical with the king, he seems to suggest that philosophy is identical with the royal art, and thus that philosophy by itself is sufficient to produce happiness. But whereas he leaves in doubt the precise relation of philosophy to the royal art, he makes it perfectly clear in his second statement that philosophy by itself is sufficient to produce happiness. And whereas it is difficult to understand why he should speak circumlocutorily about the relation of philosophy to the royal art, it is easy to understand why he should speak evasively, or even contradictorily, about the relation of philosophy to happiness. We contend that he uses the identification of philosophy with the royal art as a pedagogic device for leading the reader toward the view that theoretical philosophy by itself, and nothing else, produces true happiness in this life, i. e. the only happiness which is possible.

It is easy to see that the initiation in the doctrine that happi-

<sup>32</sup> Philosophy is the theoretical art which supplies the science of the beings, and that science is man's highest perfection: §§ 16 and 2. [Cf. also the allusion to the relation of "perfection" to "science" in §§ 14 (11, 4) and 23 (16, 4 f.; see *app. crit.*) as compared with § 12 (9, 12). Observe the distinction between "philosophy" and "perfection" in §§ 22 (15, 14) and 32 (22, 15). A divergent view is intimated in §§ 4 (5, 7) and 6 (6, 3-4).] Happiness requires the right way of life in addition to man's highest perfection: cf. § 3 with §§ 2, 16 (12, 10-13) and 1 (3, 13 f.). [Cf. the allusion to the relation of "happiness" to "way of life" as distinguished from "science" in § 16 (12, 7-10) and of "happiness" to "practical art" as distinguished from "theoretical art" in § 18 (13, 4-5) as compared with § 16.] In § 1 (3, 8) Fârâbî does not say (as R.-W. make him say) "beatitudo quae summa hominis perfectio (est)", but "beatitudo quae est ultimum quo homo perficitur". Falkera translates the expression by "beatitudo ultima" thus certainly avoiding the identification of "happiness" with "perfection". — As regards the distinction between perfection and happiness, cf. Maimonides, *Guide* III 27 (60a Munk), where human perfection is described in the same way as by Fârâbî's Plato and where the remark is added that perfection is the cause of the eternal life (see Ephodi *ad loc.*); this implies that happiness (the eternal life) is distinguished from perfection.

ness consists "in consideratione scientiarum speculativarum",<sup>33</sup> required some preparation and adjustment. Aristotle was free to state that doctrine without much ado since he was under no compulsion to reconcile it with the belief in the immortality of the soul or with the requirements of faith, to disregard here political requirements proper. Medieval thinkers were in a different position. By studying how Fârâbî proceeds concerning a relatively simple aspect of the matter, we may be enabled to grasp his intention concerning its more complex aspects.

At the beginning of the treatise with which he prefaces his exposition of the philosophies of Plato and of Aristotle, he employs the distinction between "the happiness of this world in this life" and "the ultimate happiness in the other life" as a matter of course.<sup>34</sup> In the *Plato*, which is the second and therefore the least exposed part of a tripartite work,<sup>35</sup> the distinction of the two *beatitudines* is completely dropped.<sup>36</sup> What that silence means, becomes unmistakably clear from the fact that in the whole *Plato* (which contains after all summaries of the *Phaedrus*, the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*) there is no mention whatsoever of the immortality of the soul: Fârâbî's Plato silently rejects Plato's doctrine of immortality,<sup>37</sup> or rather he considers it an exoteric doctrine. Fârâbî goes so far as to avoid

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, 1 2, qu. 3, a. 6. Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1177b17-26 with a 25-27. Cf. also *Republic* 519c5-6 with *Politicus* 272a8-d4.

<sup>34</sup> *Tahşîl*, 2. Cf. *Ihşâ al-'ulûm*, ch. 5 (near the beginning).

<sup>35</sup> Consider Cicero, *Orator* 50 and *De oratore* II 313 f.

<sup>36</sup> In Falkner's translation we find one mention of "the happiness of this world" (*Reshit hokma* 72, 20) and one mention of "the ultimate happiness" (72, 12). (These readings are not noted in the *app. crit.* of the *Plato*).

<sup>37</sup> Fârâbî, *Plato* XVIII and 24. — Fârâbî also substitutes a moral meaning of the Platonic doctrine of metempsychosis for its literal meaning: cf. § 24 (18, 5-19, 3) with *Phaedo* 81e-82b. (In the Latin translation of the passage — p. 13, 17 f. — the "an defunctus esset . . . atque transformatus" ought to be changed into "an putaret se mortuum esse et in illam bestiam atque eius figuram transformatum". Cf. with Fârâbî's statement Cicero, *De officiis* III 20, 82: "Quid enim interest, utrum ex homine se convertat quis in beluam an hominis figura immanitatem gerat beluae?") — In § 1 (3, 11 f.) Fârâbî intimates the necessity of external goods for happiness; cf. the passage with *Eth. Nic.* 1177a28 ff., 1178a23 ff. and b33 ff. on the one hand, and Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theol.*, 1 2, qu. 4. a. 7 on the other.



in his summaries of the *Phaedo* and of the *Republic* the very term "soul", and as to observe, throughout the *Plato*, a deep silence about the *voûs*,<sup>38</sup> to say nothing of the *voî*.

He could go to such lengths in the *Plato*, not merely because that treatise is the second and by far the shortest part of a tripartite work, but also because it sets forth explicitly, not so much his own views, as the views of someone else. We have noted the difference of treatment which he accords to the two *beatitudes* in the *Plato* on the one hand, and in the *Tahşîl* on the other. Employing fundamentally the same method, he pronounces more or less orthodox views concerning the life after death in *The political governments* and *The virtuous religious community*, i. e. in works in which he expounds his own doctrine. More precisely, in *The virtuous religious community* he pronounces simply orthodox views, and in *The political governments* he pronounces heretical, if what one could consider still tolerable views. But in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* he declares that there is only the happiness of this life and that all divergent statements are based on "ravings and old women's tales".<sup>39</sup>

Considering the importance of the subject, we will be excused for adducing a third example. In his *Enumeration of the Sciences* in which he speaks in his own name, Fârâbî presents the religious sciences (*fiqh* and *kalâm*) as corollaries to political science. At first sight one might believe that by assigning to the religious sciences that particular status Fârâbî merely wants to say that religion, i. e. revealed religion, i. e. the revealed law (the *sharî'a*)<sup>40</sup> comes first into the sight of the philosopher as a political fact: precisely as a philosopher, he suspends his judgment as to the

<sup>38</sup> *Noûs* is mentioned in § 27 (20, 16). In the summary of the *Phaedo*, Fârâbî mentions once "corpus animatum": § 24 (18, 16).

<sup>39</sup> Ibn Tufail, *Hayy ibn Yaqdhân*, ed. by L. Gauthier, Beyrouth 1936, 14. Cf. also Averroes' account quoted by Steinschneider, *Al-Fârâbî*, 94. — Cf. note 58 below.

<sup>40</sup> In the *Plato*, there is no mention of *sharî'a* (nor of *milla*). The root verb of *sharî'a* (*shara'a*) occurs shortly before the statement, discussed in the text, concerning religion: § 6 (6, 6). — "Belief" is mentioned in §§ 4 (5, 2 f.) and 22 (15, 5).

truth of the super-rational teaching of religion. In other words, one might believe that Fârâbî's description of the religious sciences is merely a somewhat awkward way of making room for a possible revealed theology as distinguished from natural theology (metaphysics). Every ambiguity of this kind is avoided in the *Plato*. Through the mouth of Plato, Fârâbî declares that religious speculation, and religious investigation of the beings, and the religious syllogistic art do not supply the science of the beings,<sup>41</sup> of which man's highest perfection consists, whereas philosophy does supply it. He goes so far as to present religious knowledge in general and "religious speculation" in particular<sup>42</sup> as the lowest

<sup>41</sup> Fârâbî, *Plato* § 6. It is significant that the final result of Plato's investigation concerning religion is stated with the greatest precision, not in § 6 (the section dealing with religion) where one would first look for it, but at the beginning of § 8. (Cf. the beginning of § 8 with the beginnings of §§ 7 and 9-11.) Falkner who wrote for a somewhat different public, omits the conclusions reached by Plato concerning religion in both § 6 and § 8. Cf. Maimonides' exclusion of religious subjects from the *Guide*: III 8 *vers. fin.* — R.-W. make this comment on § 6: "Certe deorum cultus a Platone non reicitur . . . Cum . . . Alfarabii opinionibus haec omnia bene quadrare videntur." (See also p. XIV). But divine worship is not rejected by Fârâbî either who, explicitly following Plato, considers conformity with the laws and beliefs of the religious community in which one is brought up, a necessary qualification for the future philosopher (*Tahşîl* 45, 6 ff.). Above all, in § 6 Fârâbî speaks, not of religious worship, but of the cognitive value of religion. His view concerning that matter is in full agreement with Plato's view as appears from such passages as *Timaeus* 40d6 ff., *Seventh Letter* 330e, and *Ion* 533d ff. Compare also Socrates' failure to refute the charge that he denied the existence of the gods of the city of Athens in the *Apology of Socrates*, and the critique of the divine laws of Crete and Sparta in the first book of the *Laws*. Fârâbî interpreted the thesis of the *Apology* (with special regard to 20d7 ff.) in this way: Socrates says to the Athenians that he does not deny their divine wisdom, but that he does not comprehend it, and that his wisdom is human wisdom only. Cf. Simon Duran, *Magên abot* (Livorno 1785), 2b. According to Averroes' interpretation of the Socratic saying as quoted, or interpreted, by Fârâbî, that saying specifically refers to the divine wisdom based on, or transmitted by, prophecy. (Paraphrase of *De sensu et sensato*, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Hébreu 1009, fol. 172 d).

<sup>42</sup> According to Fârâbî, Plato examined the cognitive value of religious speculation, of the religious investigation of the beings, and of the religious syllogistic art. But whereas he states that Plato ascribed a limited value to the two latter disciplines, he is completely silent about the result of Plato's



step of the ladder of cognitive pursuits, as inferior even to grammar and to poetry. With grammar, or rather with language, religion has this in common that it is essentially the property of a particular community.

One might think to begin with that in order to get hold of Fârâbî's views, one ought to consult primarily the works in which he sets forth his own doctrine, and not his expositions of the doctrines of other men, especially if those other men were pagans. For may one not expound, as a commentator, or as a historian, with the greatest care and without a muttering of dissent such views as he rejects as a man? May Fârâbî not have been attracted as a pupil of philosophers by what he abhorred as a believer? I do not know whether there ever was a "philosopher" whose mind was so confused as to consist of two hermetically sealed compartments: Fârâbî was a man of a different stamp. But let us assume that his mind was of the type conveniently attributed to the Latin Averroists. It almost suffices to state that assumption in order to realize its absurdity. The Latin Averroists limited themselves to giving a most literal interpretation of extremely heretical teachings. But Fârâbî did just the reverse: he gave an extremely unliteral interpretation of a most tolerable teaching. Precisely as a mere commentator of Plato, he was almost compelled to embrace a tolerably orthodox doctrine concerning the life after death.<sup>43</sup> His refusal, amounting to a flagrant deviation from the letter of Plato's teaching, to succumb to Plato's charms, proves it more convincingly than any explicit statement of his could have done,

examination of "religious speculation". The religious syllogistic art is the *fiqh*, and the religious investigation of the beings is the *kalâm* in so far as it is based on some sort of physics — cf. *Iḥṣâ* ch. 5 on the study of sensible beings by the *mutakallimûn* —; "religious speculation" may well refer to mystical knowledge of God Himself. (Cf. *E. I.*, s. v. *Nazar*). — As regards the religious syllogistic art, cf. Steinschneider, *Al-Fârâbî*, 31, where a remark of Fârâbî concerning "the religious (חוריים) syllogisms" is quoted; cf. also Maimonides, *Millot ha-higgayon*, ch. 7 *vers. fin.*

<sup>43</sup> The commentator who after all was more than a mere commentator, directly attacks the teaching of the *Republic* concerning the life after death; see his *Paraphrasis in Platonis Rempubl.* (*Opera Aristotelis*, Venice 1550, III, 182 c, 40-45 and 191 d 11-39).

that he considered the belief in a happiness different from the happiness of this life, or the belief in the other life, utterly erroneous. His silence about the immortality of the soul in a treatise destined to present the philosophy of Plato "from its beginning to its end" sets it beyond any reasonable doubt that statements asserting that immortality which occur in other writings of his, have to be dismissed as prudential accommodations to the accepted dogma. The same consideration applies to what the commentator, or historian, Fârâbî says about religion: it is not easy to see what Platonic passage could have compelled, or even induced, a believing Muslim to criticize the value of "the syllogistic religious art," i. e. of the Islamic science of *fiqh*.

Fârâbî avails himself then of the specific immunity of the commentator, or of the historian, in order to speak his mind concerning grave matters in his "historical" works rather than in the works setting forth what he presents as his own doctrine. This being the case, one has to lay down, and scrupulously to follow, this canon of interpretation: Apart from purely philologic and other preliminary considerations, one is not entitled to interpret the *Plato*, or any part or passage of it, by having recourse to Fârâbî's other writings. One is not entitled to interpret the *Plato* in the light of doctrines, expounded by Fârâbî elsewhere, which are not mentioned in the *Plato*. It goes without saying that in case the teaching of the *Plato* is in conflict with the teachings of the *Tahşîl*, *The political governments*, *The enumeration of the sciences* and so on, the presumption is in favor of the teaching of the *Plato*. Compared with the *Plato*, all these other writings are exoteric. And if it is true, as Fârâbî intimates by reminding us of the teaching of the *Phaedrus* concerning the deficiencies of writing as such, that all writings as such are exoteric,<sup>44</sup> we have to say that the *Plato* is merely less exoteric than the other works indicated and therefore that every hint however subtle which occurs in the *Plato*, deserves to take precedence over the most emphatically and the most frequently stated doctrines of his more exoteric works. For

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Phaedrus* 275 c ff., *Timaeus* 28c4-5, *Seventh Letter* 341d4-e3. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide* I Introd. (4a Munk).



there is not necessarily, not in all cases, a connection between a writer's conviction of the truth, or untruth, of an assertion, and the frequency, or rarity, with which he makes it.<sup>45</sup>

Fârâbî's silence about the ideas and about the immortality of the soul shows certainly that he does not hesitate to deviate from the letter of Plato's teaching if he considers that literal teaching erroneous. He may have believed that Plato himself considered the doctrines in question merely exoteric. But he may, or he may not have believed that the teaching which he ascribes to Plato by his silence as well as by his speech, was the Platonic teaching: he certainly considered it the true teaching. His *Plato* is then not a historical work. He presents Plato as a man who had to discover the very meaning of philosophy entirely by himself, thus implying that he had no philosophic predecessors whatsoever. Yet he knew of course, especially from the *Metaphysics*, that Plato was not the first philosopher. In accordance with this, he remarks that the subject of the *Menexenus* had been neglected by Plato's predecessors;<sup>46</sup> considering the extreme care with which the *Plato* is written, that remark is meaningful only if the subjects of all other Platonic dialogues had been treated by predecessors of Plato. He presents, not so much the historical Plato, as the typical philosopher who, as such, after having reached maturity of the mind, "comme un homme qui marche seul et dans les ténèbres,"<sup>47</sup> has to start afresh and to go his own way however much he may be assisted by the exertions of his teachers. His attitude to the historical Plato is comparable to the attitude of Plato himself to the historical Socrates, and to the attitude of the Platonic Socrates himself to, say, historical Egypt: "With what ease dost thou, o Fârâbî, invent Platonic speeches."<sup>48</sup> By this very fact he reveals himself as a true Platonist. For Platonists are not concerned with the historical (accidental) truth, since they are exclusively interested

<sup>45</sup> Maimonides, *Treatise on Resurrection*, ed. by Finkel, 19, 17 ff.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. § 31 with §16. Cf. note 7 above.

<sup>47</sup> Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, II.

<sup>48</sup> *Phaedrus*, 275b3-4. — It should be noted that Fârâbî's rejection of poetry applies — just as Plato's rejection of poetry — to common poetry only: § 8.

in the philosophic (essential) truth.<sup>49</sup> Only because public speech demands a mixture of seriousness and playfulness, can a true Platonist present the serious teaching, the philosophic teaching, in a historical, and hence playful, garb. The sovereign use which Fârâbî makes of the historical materials, presupposes of course that such materials were at his disposal. For the historian, it is of utmost importance that the extent, and the character, of the information available to Fârâbî, be established as exactly as possible. But even this cannot be done properly, if one does not bear in mind the non-historical purpose of the *Plato*: a number of apparently fanciful remarks on the purport of various dialogues may be due to Fârâbî's desire to intimate an important philosophic truth rather than to misinformation. To consider the author of the *Plato* a mere epitomist of a lost Greek text, means to disregard, not only the admiration which men of the competence of Avicenna and Maimonides felt for Fârâbî, but likewise the exceedingly careful wording of the *Plato* itself. But even if Fârâbî's interpretation of Plato's philosophy as a whole should eventually prove to be borrowed from a hitherto unknown source, we still would have to understand that interpretation by itself, and we still would have to digest the fact that a man of Fârâbî's rank adopted it as a true account of the classic philosophy and published it in his own name. It may be added that by transmitting the most precious knowledge, not in "systematic" works, but in the guise of a historical account, Fârâbî indicates his view concerning "originality" and "individuality" in philosophy: what comes into sight as the "original" or "personal" "contribution" of a philosopher is infinitely less significant than his private, and truly original and individual, understanding of the necessarily anonymous truth.

But let us return to the point where we left off. For an obvious reason, Fârâbî did not wish to break a silence which was eloquent for those only who could read the Platonic dialogues dealing with the immortality of the soul. There was a further, and in a sense, even more compelling reason for

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Protagoras* 347c3-348a6 and *Charmides* 161c3-6.



concealing the philosophic doctrine concerning happiness. To identify happiness with the perfection which consists of the science of the beings, is tantamount to closing the very prospect of happiness to the large majority of men. For reasons of philanthropy,<sup>50</sup> if for no other reason, Fârâbî was compelled to show a possibility of happiness to men other than philosophers. Therefore, he distinguishes between perfection and happiness: he asserts that philosophy, being a theoretical art, supplies indeed the science of the beings and thus man's highest perfection, but has to be supplemented by the right way of life in order to produce happiness. More generally expressed, he accepts to begin with the orthodox opinion that philosophy is insufficient to lead man to happiness. Yet, he makes clear, the supplement to philosophy which is required for the attaining of happiness, is supplied, not by religion, or revelation, but by politics. He substitutes politics for religion. He thus lays the foundation for the secular alliance between philosophers and enlightened princes. It is true, he immediately thereafter retracts his concession by stating that philosophy by itself supplies the right way of life and therewith by itself produces happiness, but he adds the clause that philosophy produces the happiness, not only of the philosophers, but of all other human beings as well. This extravagantly philanthropic remark would have to be dismissed as a sheer absurdity, or its text would have to be emended, if it were meant to be final; for how can the mere fact that a single philosopher is in existence somewhere in India have the slightest influence on the happiness, or misery, of people living in the remotest parts of Frankistan who have nothing in common with him or philosophy? The statement that philosophy produces the happiness of all human beings merely serves the purpose of indicating the whole extent of the difficulty facing Fârâbî; it thus paves the way for a provisional solution and therewith indirectly for the final solution. The provisional solution is that philosophy produces the happiness of the philosophers and of all those non-philosophers who are actually

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1094b 9 f. and 1099b 18-20 with *Politics* 1325a8-11. — As regards the "philanthropic" appearance of the teaching of Plato's *Republic*, cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1263b15 ff.

guided by philosophers. In other words, the required supplement to philosophy is, not just the royal art, but the actual exercise of the royal art by philosophers within a definite political community. Fârâbî goes still further. He declares that not only the happiness of the non-philosophers — of the citizens as citizens —, but the very perfection, and therewith the happiness, of the philosophers themselves is impossible except in the virtuous city whose most important part are the philosophers.<sup>51</sup> He calls the virtuous city emphatically "an other city":<sup>52</sup> he thus indicates that he means to replace, not simply religion in general by politics in general, but "the other world" or "the other life" by "the other city". "The other city" stands midway between "this world" and "the other world", in so far as it is an earthly city indeed, but a city existing, not actually, but only "in speech". Fârâbî's Plato does not leave it at that: he raises the question of how the virtuous city could become actual, and he answers that this could only be achieved by "the legislator of this city". "Therefore he investigated thereafter what kind of man the legislator must be."<sup>53</sup> Fârâbî does not reveal to the

<sup>51</sup> § 25 (cf. in particular 20, 13 f.). Cf. § 24 *vers. fin.* — Cf. with § 25 (20, 10) which R.-W. correctly render by "et philosophos in ea (civitate) partem maximam esse", Augustinus' *Civitas Dei* XI 9: "(sancti angeli) quae hujus (sc. sanctae) civitatis . . . magna pars est".

<sup>52</sup> § 25 (19, 12 and 20, 4). Cf. the use of "other" in §§ 1 (3, 11–13), 11 (9, 8) and 22 (16, 2). Cf. also §§ 14 (11, 6) and 24 (17, 7). — Fârâbî speaks also of the "other nation" in particular and of nations in general, but he prefers to speak of the "other city" and of cities (he uses "city" three times as often as "nation"): "Where first were great and flourishing cities, there was first the study of philosophy." (Hobbes). In his account of the studies to be pursued in the perfect community, he uses exclusively "city" (§ 26). As regards the non-quantitative aspect of the difference between city and nation, one has to consider § 7, where only "nation", and not "city", is mentioned: the nation is kept together by a common language. The bond of the city, on the other hand, is the law; cf. § 32 (22, 18–23, 1).

<sup>53</sup> § 29. — Fârâbî's technique of writing is illustrated by the fact that immediately thereafter (§ 30 *in princ.*), he uses *فعل* (*fecit*) — cf. § 29 (21, 11) *بالفعل* (*actu*) —, and not, as he usually does, *له تبين* (*ei manifestum fuit*) or another term designating a purely mental activity. — The *فعل* near the beginning of § 30 refers back, not only to § 29, but to §§ 26–29. In this connection it may be mentioned that R.-W.'s division of the *Plato* into sections



readers the result of this Platonic investigation.<sup>54</sup> In the treatise which precedes the *Plato*, he asserts the identity of legislator and philosopher, but for the reasons mentioned before one is not entitled to assume that the teaching of Fârâbî's *Plato* is identical with that set forth by Fârâbî in his own name.<sup>55</sup> The silence of the *Plato* about the subject permits us then to imagine for a moment that the legislator is a prophet, the founder of a revealed religion. Since the legislator, as the founder of the virtuous city, creates the indispensable condition for the actualization of happiness, happiness would thus not be possible but on the basis of revelation. Fârâbî's *Plato* does not close that loophole by identifying the prophet, or the legislator, with the philosopher. He intimates indeed that the function of the legislator is not the highest human perfection,

is somewhat arbitrary. Fârâbî's own division is clearly indicated by the use of *فلمّا* or *ولمّا* at the beginning of a paragraph. Accordingly, section I consists of §§ 1-3, section II of §§ 4-5, section III of §§ 6-11, section IV of §§ 12-15, section V of §§ 16-22, section VI of §§ 23-25, section VII of §§ 26-29, and section VIII of §§ 30-32.

<sup>54</sup> He is equally reticent as regards the result of Plato's investigations concerning religious speculation (§ 6), *σωφροσύνη* (§ 19), love and friendship (§ 21). Compare with the last example the different procedure as regards courage: § 20. His typical procedure is to state first what Plato "investigated" and thereafter what he "made clear" or what "became clear to him". Every deviation from that scheme requires an explanation. One has then to pay special attention not only to the "investigations" not followed by mentions of what Plato "made clear" or of what "became clear to him", but likewise to the cases in which no investigation is mentioned. Probably the most important example of omissions of "investigation" is the statement concerning the identity of philosopher and king: § 18 (13, 6-11). It is hardly necessary to add that the difference between what Plato made clear (*sc.* to others) and what become clear to him is not altogether negligible. — Cf. notes 12, 40, and 53 above.

<sup>55</sup> For the interpretation of the statement on the legislator, one has to consider Fârâbî's interpretation of Plato's *Laws*. He conceives of the *Laws*, not, as Plato himself had done, as a correction of the *Republic*, but as a supplement to the *Republic*: whereas according to Plato the *Republic* and the *Laws* deal with essentially different political orders (*πολιτεῖαι*), Fârâbî's view is closely akin to that of Cicero (*Legg.*, I 5, 15; 6, 14; 10, 23; III 2, 4), according to whom the *Republic* deals with the best political order and the *Laws* deal with the best laws belonging to the very same best political order.

and he takes it for granted that there could be a plurality of virtuous cities,<sup>56</sup> thus excluding the belief in a single true, or final, revealed religion. But the real remedy employed in the *Plato* is far more radical: toward the end of the treatise, Fârâbî makes it absolutely clear that there can be, not only philosophers, but even perfect human beings (i. e. philosophers who have reached the goal of philosophy) in imperfect cities.<sup>57</sup> Philosophy and the perfection of philosophy and hence happiness do not require — this is Fârâbî's last word on the subject — the establishment of the perfect political community: they are possible, not only in this world, but even in these cities, the imperfect cities. But — and this is the essential implication — in the imperfect cities, i. e. in the world as it actually is and as it always will be, happiness is within the reach of the philosophers alone: the non-philosophers are eternally barred, by the nature of things, from happiness. Happiness consists "in consideratione scientiarum speculativarum" and of nothing else.<sup>58</sup> Philosophy is *the* necessary and sufficient condition of happiness.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. § 29 with § 2. Cf. § 25 (20,5 and 12) with *Musterstaat* 70, 9 and *Pol. gov.* 72 and 74.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. § 32 *in princ.* with §§ 23, 24 *vers. fin.* and 25. — In the last three paragraphs, Fârâbî indicates his real view of the relation of philosopher and king by the different manners in which he enumerates philosophers, kings, legislators, and the virtuous: §§ 30 (22, 6 f.), 31, and 32 (22, 15). That view can be stated as follows: "king" is an ambiguous term which designates either the man who possesses the political art and who is necessarily subject to the legislator, or the philosopher who has reached his goal by having completed the philosophic investigation.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. §§ 1–2 and the remark of Averroes (quoted by Steinschneider, *Al-Farabi*, 106): "In li. enim de Nicomachia videtur [Fârâbî] negare continuationem esse cum intelligentiis abstractis: et dicit hanc esse opinionem Alexandri, et quod non est opinionandum quod finis humanus sit aliud quam perfectio speculativa." (Cf. Thomas Aquinas' commentary on *Eth. Nic.*, X, lect. 13. *vers. fin.*). — Our interpretation of the thesis of the *Plato* is confirmed, to a certain extent, by Falkera's remark (*Reshit hokma* 72, 22–25) that, according to Plato, true happiness consists of knowledge, *viz.* knowledge of God which is not possible without the knowledge of the creatures. Fârâbî does not speak of God, but of all beings. As regards a similar change from the philosophic to a more theologic view, cf. the authentic text of Maimonides' *Mishna tora*, H. De'ot IV 1 (Hyamson 50, 19 f.) with the vulgate text.



It would be a mistake however to consider Fârâbî's emphatic statements about the political aspect of philosophy a mere stepping-stone destined to facilitate the ascent from the popular notions about the happiness of the other world to philosophy. For the philosopher necessarily lives in political society, and he thus cannot escape the situation created by the naturally difficult relations between the philosopher and the non-philosophic citizens, "the vulgar": the philosopher living in a society which is not ruled by philosophers, i. e. the philosopher living in any actual society, is necessarily "in grave danger".<sup>59</sup> Fârâbî intimates his solution by speaking of the twofold account which Plato gave of Socrates' life: he tells us that Plato repeated his account of Socrates' way and that he repeated his mention of the vulgar of the cities and nations which existed in his time.<sup>60</sup> As we might have learned from Maimonides, "repetition" is a normal pedagogic device which is destined to reveal the truth to those who are able to understand by themselves while hiding it from the vulgar: whereas the vulgar are blinded by the features common to the first statement and the "repetition", those who are able to understand will pay the utmost attention to the differences, however apparently negligible, between the two statements and in particular to the "addition", made in the "repetition", to the first statement.<sup>61</sup> According to Fârâbî, Plato's first account of the way of Socrates deals with Socrates' attitude toward the opinions and habits of his fellow-citizens. The second account, on the other hand, deals with Plato's correction of the Socratic attitude, or with Plato's attitude.<sup>62</sup> Socrates' attitude was determined by the fact that he limited his investigations to moral and political

<sup>59</sup> § 32 *in princ.* Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 64 b; *Republic* 494a4-10 and 520b2-3.

<sup>60</sup> §§ 30 (22, 1) and 32 (22, 14).

<sup>61</sup> *Guide*, III 3 *in princ.* and 23 (50a Munk).

<sup>62</sup> Note the emphatic هو (which R.-W. left untranslated) in § 32 (23, 2): Plato described in his *Letters* what he thought about the manner of dealing with his fellow-citizens. Compare this with the corresponding هو in § 16 (12, 10): he (Plato) was compelled to present philosophy because he did not find it among the arts and sciences which were generally known.

subjects,<sup>63</sup> i. e. that he neglected natural philosophy. Being merely a moral philosopher, he was a moralist. Hence, he did not look beyond this alternative: either to comply with the accepted rules of conduct and the accepted opinions or openly to challenge them and therewith to expose himself to persecution and violent death.<sup>64</sup> As a consequence of his uncompromising attitude, he fell victim to the rage of the multitude. The attitude of Plato was fundamentally different. As we have seen, he considered philosophy an essentially theoretical pursuit, and therefore he was not a moralist: his moral fervor was mitigated by his insight into the nature of beings; thus he could adjust himself to the requirements of political life, or to the ways and opinions of the vulgar. In his treatment of the subjects in question, he combined the way of Socrates with the way of — Thrasymachus.<sup>65</sup> While the intransigent way of Socrates is appropriate in the philosopher's dealings with the political élite only, the less exacting way of Thrasymachus is appropriate in his dealings with the vulgar and the young. By combining the two ways, Plato avoided the conflict with the vulgar and thus the fate of Socrates. Accordingly, the "revolutionary" quest for the other city ceased to be a necessity: Plato substituted for it a much more "conservative" way of action, *viz.* the gradual replacement of the accepted opinions by the truth or an approximation to the truth. The replacement, however gradual, of the accepted opinions is of course a destruction of the accepted opinions.<sup>66</sup> But being emphatically gradual, it is best described as an undermining of the accepted opinions. For it would not be gradual, if it were not combined with a provisional acceptance of the accepted opinions: as Fârâbî elsewhere declares, conformity with the opinions of the religious community in which one is brought up, is a necessary qualification for the future

<sup>63</sup> Cf. § 16 with §§ 28 and 30 (22, 4-5).

<sup>64</sup> § 24 (19, 3-11).

<sup>65</sup> § 30. Even if that paragraph should be meant to be a summary of the *Clitopho* only, we cannot disregard the fact that Fârâbî knew the Thrasymachus of the *Republic*. His statement on the combination of the way of Socrates with that of Thrasymachus is based on *Republic* 498c9-d1.

<sup>66</sup> § 32.



philosopher.<sup>67</sup> The goal of the gradual destruction of the accepted opinions is the truth, as far as the élite, the potential philosophers, is concerned, but only an approximation to the truth (or an imaginative representation of the truth)<sup>68</sup> as far as the general run of men is concerned.<sup>69</sup> We may say that Fârâbî's Plato replaces Socrates' philosopher-king who rules openly in the perfect city by the secret kingship of the philosopher who lives privately as a member of an imperfect community. That kingship is exercised by means of an exoteric teaching which, while not too flagrantly contradicting the accepted opinions, undermines them in such a way as to guide the potential philosophers toward the truth.<sup>70</sup> Fârâbî's remarks on Plato's own policy define the general character of all literary productions of "the philosophers".

In conclusion it may be remarked that the distinction between perfection and happiness is not altogether exoteric. When

<sup>67</sup> Cf. note 41 above. Cf. the first two maxims of Descartes' "morale par provision" (*Discours de la méthode*, III). Cf. also Fontenelle, *Éloge de Mr. Lémery*: "Les choses fort établies ne peuvent être attaquées que par degrés."—As regards the necessity of the gradual change of laws, cf. Plato, *Laws* 736d2–4 and Aristotle, *Politics* 1269a12 ff.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. note 48 above.

<sup>69</sup> Note Fârâbî's replacing "the truth" (22, 17) first by "the virtuous way of life" or "the correct *nomoi*" (23, 3) and then by "opinions" (23, 6). Falkera appropriately translates *اراء* ("opinions") in this context by *מצות* ("plans" or "designs"). (In § 22, he translates *اراء* equally appropriately in that context by *אמנות*). The meaning of *מצות* is explained by him in *Reshit hokma* 70, 6 ff. Cf. also Maimonides, *Guide*, I 34 (40b Munk).

<sup>70</sup> The distinction made by Fârâbî between the attitude of Socrates and that of Plato corresponds, to a certain extent, to the distinction made by Muhammad b. Zakariyyâ al-Râzî in his *k. al-sîrat al-falsafiyya*, between the attitude of the young Socrates and that of the mature Socrates. Râzî's opponents had asserted that his model Socrates "n'a pas pratiqué la dissimulation, ni vis-à-vis du vulgaire ni vis-à-vis des autorités, mais il les a affrontées en leur disant ce qu'il considérait être vrai en des termes clairs et non-équivoques." Râzî admits that this account is correct as far as the young Socrates is concerned: "les traits qu'ils rapportent de Socrate lui ont été propres au début de sa carrière jusqu'à une date assez avancée de sa vie, date à laquelle il en a abandonné la plupart." Paul Kraus, "Raziana" I, *Orientalia*, N. S., v. 4, 1935, 322 f. — As regards the life of the philosopher in an imperfect community, cf. Plato's *Republic* 496 d ff.

Fârâbî says that happiness is "ultimum quo homo perficitur", he thinks of the pleasure attending the actualization of man's highest perfection. For it is pleasure which "renders perfect" (τελειοῦ) the exercise of a faculty, and it is a specific pleasure together with the exercise of man's highest perfection which constitutes human happiness.<sup>71</sup> This being the case, happiness is not simply identical with human perfection or its exercise. Fârâbî indicates the particular importance of pleasure by saying of the Platonic dialogue which praises true pleasure (what he says of no other Platonic dialogue) that it is "attributed" (i. e. merely attributed) to Socrates;<sup>72</sup> for Socrates was compelled by his moralism to stress the conflict between the noble and the pleasant rather than their harmony.

### III. PHILOSOPHY AND MORALS

The relation of philosophy to morals is adumbrated in the third paragraph of the *Plato*. In the first paragraph, Fârâbî had stated that a certain science and a certain way of life are essential to happiness. In the second paragraph, he answers the question as to what that science is. The third paragraph deals with the way of life in question, but it does not deal with it thematically: its thematic subject is, not the desired way of life, but happiness. Fârâbî thus intimates that he is not going to disclose what the desired way of life is. He says: "Deinde postea investigavit, quid esset beatitudo quae revera beatitudo esset et ex qua scientia oreretur et quis esset habitus et quae actio. Quam distinxit ab ea quae beatitudo putatur sed non est. Et aperuit vitam virtuosam [R.-W.: optimam] esse eam qua haec [R.-W.: illa] beatitudo obtineretur." The virtuous way of life leads to "haec beatitudo", i. e. to the apparent happiness which is distinguished from the true happiness; the virtuous way of life is fundamentally distinguished from the desired way of life which is essential to true happiness. Our interpretation is confirmed by Falkera's translation: "he made it known that the virtuous

<sup>71</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1174 b23, 1175a21, 1176a24-28. Cf. *Politics* 1339b18-20.

<sup>72</sup> § 15.



way of life is the one by which the happiness of *this world* is obtained." The happiness of this world is naturally distinguished from, and inferior to, the happiness of the other world: the virtuous way of life does not lead to the happiness of the other world. In accordance with Fârâbî's statement, Maimonides teaches that the moral virtues serve the well-being of the body or man's "first perfection" as distinguished from the well-being of the soul or man's "ultimate perfection" which consists of, or is produced by, knowledge or contemplation alone.<sup>73</sup>

Fârâbî does not say then what the desired way of life is; he merely makes it known what it is not. Yet by denying that the desired way of life is the virtuous way of life, he tacitly asserts that the desired way of life is the contemplative way of life. He states later on that the desired way of life is supplied by the royal art and immediately thereafter he seems to suggest that the royal art is identical with philosophy. The identification of philosophy as the highest theoretical art with the royal art as the highest practical art can be literally valid only if the specific products of both arts, the science of the beings and the desired way of life, are identical, in other words, if contemplation itself is the highest form of action.<sup>74</sup>

The translators can justly be blamed for the unnecessarily unliteral character of their translation. On the other hand, they deserve praise for bringing out in their translation their understanding of the passage mentioned. For while that understanding amounts to a radical misunderstanding of Fârâbî's ultimate intention, it does not proceed from an accidental error: Fârâbî wanted to be understood by the majority of his readers in exactly the same way in which he has been understood by his modern translators. He has built up the three first paragraphs as a whole<sup>75</sup> and the third paragraph in particular in such a way as to create the impression as if he were going to identify the

<sup>73</sup> *Guide*, III 27. Accordingly, Maimonides treats medicine and morals in one and the same section of the *Mishne tora* (H. De'ot).

<sup>74</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* 1325b16-22.

<sup>75</sup> The first three paragraphs, and not merely, as R.-W. assume, the first paragraph by itself, form the first section of the *Plato*. Cf. note 53 above.

desired way of life with the virtuous way of life. For he makes his readers expect that the third paragraph will be devoted to the disclosure of what the desired way of life is; and the only way of life mentioned in the third paragraph is the virtuous way of life. He knew of course that he would be met half-way by the large majority of his readers. Not only will most readers not observe the difference between the expected subject of the paragraph (the desired way of life) and its actual subject (happiness), because their expectation will determine what they perceive; most readers will besides expect from the outset, i. e. independently of any suggestions of the author, that the author will identify the desired way of life with the virtuous way of life, because they themselves believe in their identity.<sup>76</sup>

The question of morals is taken up again by Fârâbî in his discussion of the ordinary practical arts. Those arts, he says, do not supply the desired way of life, but only the useful things (τὰ συμφέροντα) which are necessary (ἀναγκαῖα) and the gainful things (τὰ κερδαλέα) which are not necessary, but practically identical with the virtuous (or noble) things (τὰ καλά).<sup>77</sup> That is to say: the desired way of life does not belong to the class of the noble things, and since the virtuous way of life is the noble thing *par excellence*, the desired way of life is fundamentally different from the virtuous way of life. By identifying, at least for all practical purposes, the noble with the gainful, Fârâbî indicates that the virtues in particular are merely a means toward "the happiness of this world" or man's "first perfection".<sup>78</sup>

After having gone thus far, he distinguishes between the truly useful and the truly gainful or noble on the one hand, and what

<sup>76</sup> Cf. the remarks of Montesquieu on this subject in *De l'Esprit des Lois*, "Avertissement de l'auteur" and XXV 2.

<sup>77</sup> § 12 (10, 1-10). Cf. Aristotle, *Politics* 1291a 1 ff. Cf. Plato, *Republic* 558 d 11-e 4.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. § 3 as interpreted above with § 1 (3, 10 f.): the apparent happiness consists of health, riches, honours and the like. Cf. the distinction between philosophy or the political art on the one hand, and the noble things on the other in § 22 (14, 5; cf. 14, 18); and the distinction between the philosopher, the perfect human being and the virtuous in §§ 31 f.



the vulgar believes to be useful and gainful or noble on the other. He makes it clear that the (truly) gainful and the (truly) noble things are the desired science and the desired way of life, whereas philosophy which leads to the desired science and the desired way of life, is the truly useful.<sup>79</sup> He thus paves the way for the identification of the desired way of life essential to happiness with the truly virtuous way of life,<sup>80</sup> and for the distinction between genuine virtue, love and friendship on the one hand, and what the vulgar considers virtue, love and friendship on the other.<sup>81</sup>

If Fârâbî's last word on the subject is then hardly discernible from what the most influential moral teachers of mankind have always insisted upon, why did he suggest in the first place a doctrine as shocking as the distinction between the way of life which is essential to happiness, and the virtuous way of life is bound to be? There can be only one answer: his first statement is indispensable for the proper understanding of his ultimate statement; his ultimate statement is as remote from the generally accepted doctrine as is his first statement. If he had identified from the outset the desired way of life with the truly virtuous way of life, he would have created the impression that the difference between the truly virtuous way of life and the virtuous way of life "which is famous in the cities", is identical with the difference between the highest morality and a lower morality. Actually however he holds the view that only the virtuous way of life in the ordinary sense of the term is moral strictly speaking. For the moral life consists of the submission to the demands of honour and duty without reasoning why; it consists of choosing, and doing, the just and noble for no reason other than because it is just and noble. The choice of the just and noble as such is the specifically moral purpose. The difference between moral choice and a choice which is not moral, is essentially a difference of purpose, and not a difference of knowledge. On the other hand, the difference between the truly virtuous way of life and

<sup>79</sup> §§ 12 (10, 10-11, 3) and 17-18.

<sup>80</sup> §§ 22 (15, 15-17); 23 (16, 12 and 17, 4); 24 (17, 15-20); 32 (22, 17).

<sup>81</sup> §§ 19-21 and 25.

all other ways of life is based, not on a difference of purpose, of quality of the will, but on a difference of knowledge. In other words, there is a broad agreement between the conduct of moral man and that of the philosopher: that agreement permits one to apply one and the same term ("virtue") to both. But the same conduct is interpreted in a fundamentally different manner by moral man on the one hand, and by the philosopher on the other: that difference compels Fârâbî to deny to begin with that the desired way of life is the virtuous way of life.

#### IV. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF PHILOSOPHY

"Philosophy" designates the theoretical art which supplies the science of the essence of each of all the beings as well as both the actual investigation of things which leads to that science and that science itself. The science of the essence of all beings is sometimes simply called "that (*sc.* that specific) science of the beings" or "that (*sc.* that specific) science of all the beings".<sup>82</sup> "Being" is not identical with "thing"; all "beings" are "things", but not all "things" are "beings". There are "things" which are not the subjects of any science, and hence not the subjects of philosophy in particular.<sup>83</sup> Other "things" are adequately dealt with by other sciences, by grammar *e. g.*, but do not concern the philosopher precisely because they are not "beings". The perfection of a "being" is a "thing", but being the perfection of a "being", it is not itself a "being".<sup>84</sup> A way of life is a "thing", but not a "being"; hence the science of the beings is fundamentally distinguished from the science of the ways of life.<sup>85</sup> The ἀναγκαῖα, κερδαλέα, συμφέροντα, καλὰ and so on are, as such, "things", but not "beings".<sup>86</sup> Since all "things" other than "beings" are essentially dependent on "beings", being their qualities, relations, actions, products, and so on, and since

<sup>82</sup> §§ 4 (4, 13); 6 (6, 14); 8 (7, 12); 12 (9, 12 and 15); 16 (12, 11).

<sup>83</sup> § 10 (8, 14-16). Cf. § 22 (16, 7 f.).

<sup>84</sup> § 1 *in princ.* Cf. *Iḥṣā al-'ulūm* ch. 4, section on metaphysics, *in princ.*

<sup>85</sup> §§ 1 (3, 12-14); 6 (6, 15 f.); 8 (7, 13 f. and 16 f.); 9 (8, 2 f.).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. §§ 12-13.



therefore the full understanding of the essence of all these "things" ultimately presupposes the understanding of the essence of all "beings", philosophy can be called "the science of the essence of the things."<sup>87</sup>

In one passage, Fârâbî calls the science of the beings the "science of the natural beings".<sup>88</sup> By doing so, he certainly implies that the beings *par excellence* are the natural beings as distinguished from the artificial beings.<sup>89</sup> But what about the supernatural, the incorporeal beings? In another passage, he calls the science of the beings with special reference to the subject matter of the *Timaeus* the science of "the divine and the natural beings".<sup>90</sup> There are two ways of reconciling the two divergent statements. In the first place, one may say that in the first statement "natural" is used in a broad sense and designates all beings which do not owe their existence to human art: "ad philosophiam naturalem pertinet considerare ordinem rerum quem ratio humana considerat sed non facit, ita quod sub naturali philosophia comprehendamus et metaphysicam."<sup>91</sup> Since the explicit reference to "the divine beings" occurs in a summary of the *Timaeus*, the manner in which Plato uses the terms designating divine things in the *Timaeus* cannot be completely disregarded. In the *Timaeus*, Plato applies such terms to the maker of the universe, the gods who manifest themselves so far as they wish (Zeus, Hera, and so on), the visible universe, the heaven, the stars, the earth. Hence, one could also say that the divine beings referred to by Fârâbî are simply the most outstanding group of natural beings in the sense of beings "which are bodies or in bodies", i. e. the heavens.<sup>92</sup> The identification of the heavenly bodies with God is said to have been the esoteric

<sup>87</sup> § 7 (7, 4).

<sup>88</sup> § 8 (7, 13 f.).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Metaphysics* 991b 6 f. with the passages indicated in note 20 above.

<sup>90</sup> § 26 (20, 15 f.).

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Aquinas' commentary on *Eth. Nic.*, I, lect. 1. Cf. *Summa theologiae*, 2 2, qu. 48.

<sup>92</sup> *Timaeus* 30 a 2; 34 a 7-b 9; 40 b5-c2 and d4; 69c2-4; 92 c5-9. Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1141 b1-2.

teaching of Avicenna.<sup>93</sup> We observed already the deep silence of the *Plato* about the *voû*, the *substantiae separatae*, as well as about the "ideas". We have to add that in his treatise on Aristotle's philosophy, which is the sequel to his *Plato*, Fârâbî does not discuss Aristotle's metaphysics.<sup>94</sup> The second interpretation of the two passages under consideration is of course irreconcilable with the teaching which Fârâbî sets forth when speaking in his own name.

But does he not explicitly mention, if only once, "spiritual things", thus admitting quite unequivocally the existence of *substantiae separatae*? Our first answer has to be that spiritual things are not spiritual beings. Yet, someone might retort, there cannot be spiritual things, if there are no spiritual beings, just as there cannot be a *δαιμόνιον*, if there are no *δαίμονες*.<sup>95</sup> However this may be, it suffices to state that Fârâbî's only mention of spiritual things occurs in a summary of popular opinions, or at any rate of opinions of men other than Plato, about a certain subject. In the same context, he uses four times the term "divine things".<sup>96</sup> In three out of the four cases, he attributes the use of the term to people other than Plato. The only remark in which he mentions "divine things" while relating Plato's views, refers to the desire for divine things which is distinguished from bestial desire. He does not explain what these divine things are. I am inclined to believe that they are identical with the science of the beings and the right way of life. He mentions in the same context divine desires and divine love, evidently understanding by them passions or qualities of human beings; somewhat later, he calls these passions or qualities "praiseworthy and divine", thus indicating that "divine" does not necessarily refer to the superhuman origin of a passion e. g., but may simply designate its excellence.<sup>97</sup> At any rate, in the

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Averroes, *Tahâfut al-tahâfut* X (ed. by M. Bouyges, Beyrouth 1930, 421).

<sup>94</sup> Fârâbî, *Plato* XVIII.

<sup>95</sup> § 22 (15, 2). Cf. Plato, *Apology* of Socrates 27b3-c3.

<sup>96</sup> § 22 (14, 16; 15, 6 and 12 and 13).

<sup>97</sup> *Ib.* (15, 3 f. and 7 f.). Cf. *Eth. Nic.* 1099 b14-18, and Plato, *Laws* 631 d 4-6. (Cf. Lessing, *Von Adam Neuser* § 14 vers. fin.)



whole passage under consideration "divine" is used as part of the dichotomy "divine-human" or "divine-bestial". Now, in what is best described as the "repetition" of that passage, Fârâbî replaces that dichotomy by the dichotomy "human-bestial":<sup>98</sup> what he called "divine" in the first statement, is finally called by him "human".<sup>99</sup>

It would be rash to maintain that the foregoing observations suffice for establishing what Fârâbî believed as regards any *substantiae separatae*. They do suffice however for justifying the assertion that his philosophy does not stand and fall with the acceptance of such substances. For him, philosophy is the attempt to know the essence of each of all beings: his concept of philosophy is not based on any preconceived opinion as to what allegedly real things are truly real things. He has infinitely more in common with a philosophic materialist than with any non-philosophic believer however well-intentioned. For him, philosophy is essentially and purely theoretical. It is the way leading to the science of the beings as distinguished from the

<sup>98</sup> § 24. For the understanding of the "first statement" — § 22 (14, 4-15, 12) — one has to consider the fact that Fârâbî avoids there the expressions "he made clear" and "it became clear to him" while he speaks fairly frequently of what Plato "mentioned". Cf. notes 53-54 above. — As regards Fârâbî's silence about God, cf. the following remark of Martin Grabmann ("Der lateinische Averroismus des 13. Jahrhunderts", *Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philos.-hist. Abtlg.*, 1931, Heft 2, 29): "Boetius von Dacien gebraucht ähnlich wie Siger von Brabant, Martinus von Dacien und überhaupt viele andere Professoren der Artistenfakultät für Gott die ausgesprochen metaphysische Bezeichnung *ens primum* — vielfach reden die Artisten nur vom *primum* — oder *principium* und überlässt den Theologen den Namen *Deus*." Cf. notes 41 and 58 above.

<sup>99</sup> The importance of the topic "homo" or "humanus" is indicated from the outset by the density of "homo" in § 1. Almost equally important as the distinctions homo-Deus (§ 22) and homo-bestia (§ 24) are the distinctions homo-vir (cf. § 14) and homo-civis or homo-vulgus. (It should be noted that the densities of "homo" on the one hand, and those of "civitas", "natio", "vulgus" and "lex" on the other are fairly clearly distinguished). — In the section dealing with the theoretical arts — §§ 6-11 (6, 10-9, 10) — "homo" is avoided in the passage dealing with religion, while it occurs most frequently in the passage dealing with poetry. It is true, "homo" is also avoided in the passage dealing with rhetoric; but there it is replaced by a repeated "nos". — Cf. notes 27, 41 and 48 above.

science of the ways of life. It is the way leading to that science rather than that science itself: the investigation rather than the result.<sup>100</sup> Philosophy thus understood is identical with the scientific spirit "in action", with *σκέψις* in the original sense of the term, i. e. with the actual quest for truth which is animated by the conviction that that quest alone makes life worth living, and which is fortified by the distrust of man's natural propensity to rest satisfied with satisfying, if unevident or unproven, convictions. A man such as Fârâbî doubtless had definite convictions concerning a number of important points, although it is not as easy to say what these convictions were as the compilers of textbooks and of most monographs seem to think. But what made him a philosopher, according to his own view of philosophy, were not those convictions, but the spirit in which they were acquired, in which they were maintained and in which they were intimated rather than preached from the house-tops. Only by reading Maimonides' *Guide* against the background of philosophy thus understood, can we hope eventually to fathom its unexplored depths.

<sup>100</sup> Not without good reasons does he introduce philosophy as the art which supplies the science of the beings, and not as that science itself. — Consider also § 26.